

via paciS

The voice of the Des Moines Catholic Worker community

DECEMBER 2017

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THE DES MOINES CATHOLIC WORKER NEEDS YOU!

By Frank Cordaro

For the last two years, Melonie Stall, Patrick's Mom, has been doing our books. She is a godsend!

Now, with her help, we have confirmed that our yearly expenses at the DMCW are about \$50,000 a year, and so our estimates these past ten years have been pretty much on the mark.

And, we can continue to claim that, for the services rendered to the homeless and needy in our neighborhood – by the number of meals served, and the tons of stuff given away, plus the hundreds if not thousands of volunteer hours needed to do the work – no institutional program serving the poor, either State, Church, non-profit and for-profit alike, could operate on so little.

Melonie's last financial statement email gave me some concern, so I emailed her back this question: "Does this mean we are not raising enough money this year to pay our expected bills in December and the coming months?"

"To answer your question directly," Melonie replied, "– yes, I believe you are not raising enough money to pay for expected bills in December and beyond. You are on track to bring in \$43,000 for 2017, whereas the budget is \$55,000 – or \$12,000 short. The budget of \$55,000 is based upon the expected expenses for 2017 which are on track to be close to the \$55,000 mark."

So here we are again, looking at running out of money by December. And, I am reminded, this is the reason we started using the December issue of *via pacis* as our yearly "Beg for \$\$\$ Issue." We started doing this when we found ourselves often broke going into the Christmas season. We told our *via pacis* readership that our December issue will be our once-a-year beg for money. We've been making this yearly beg in the most generous of seasons, Christmas, in hopes of raising enough money to pay most of next year's bills.

We do this knowing that twenty percent of our budget goes to printing and mailing the *via pacis* four times per year. This is because, it has been you, our *via pacis* readership, who have donated most of our yearly cash needs.

So far, our *via pacis* December begs have worked. We've paid our bills because of all of your generosity, and we have met every emergency need as it came.

Every year it's been an act of faith to trust we will be able to continue to pay our bills and meet any emergency needs, all in gratitude to your willingness to donate.

While we have always been wholeheartedly grateful for your support, this year we have Melonie's bookkeeping report backing our claim! We really do need your help (just as we do each year)!

This year, your kind offerings will be distributed among the following projects:

Hospitality at Dingman House

We offer daytime hospitality on the first floor of Dingman House five days a week (Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Sunday from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. and Saturday from noon to 2 p.m.). We serve two meals a day, four times a week, and one meal on Saturday. During the aforementioned timeframes, our guests can take a shower, use our bathroom, enjoy a cup of coffee, watch T.V., or make a phone call, all within the proximity of our Dingman House.

We also have a "Store Room" where we give food, toiletries

and clothes away during and between mealtimes. We are especially in need of winter clothes, blankets, scarves, hats and gloves during the fall and winter months, and underwear and socks are in demand all year round. On Tuesdays and Fridays, we do a "food giveaway" out of Dingman House with perishable food donated from Trader Joe's and Whole Foods.

Between all of these services we offer, we can serve any-

Two Vans

The community maintains two vans at no small cost in gas and upkeep. Both are essential to transport donations from our donating suppliers, grocery stores, and other food donation locations to the DMCW houses among other community travel necessities.

Four Other Catholic Worker Houses

We are currently hosting community members, "want to be" community members, full-time volunteers, friends, and guests living in Dingman House and in our other four houses. No one is paid a salary. We all get room and board in exchange for the work we do at Dingman House.

The bills and property taxes for Rachel Corrie House and Chelsea Manning House are paid from the DMCW donations.

(The Berrigan House bills and property taxes are paid by a separate Berrigan Spring Fundraiser Appeal, sent to about one third of our *via pacis* readership – about another \$15,000 is needed. Our fifth house at 1433 9th St. is in a season of Advent, awaiting a mission and focus.)

Upkeep and maintenance of five old houses in the inner city is also a challenge which can be very costly. There are always plumbing, electrical, and carpentry projects that need to be done, and only the most pressing ones get our attention.

The most important work we do ...

There is no question about it! The DMCW is known for its activism – guilty as charged! But ... (and it's a big BUT) the most important work we do is the hospitality we offer at Dingman House. Besides being the most "REAL" Kingdom thing we do as far as Jesus' teachings, it is really a beautiful place to hang out for community members and our guests alike. There is a spirit of community in which our guests, whom we serve, feel safe in our home. Safe space is rare for the people we serve. It's a predatory world on the streets in which a "winners and losers" reality is lived, and unfortunately, our guests typically come out on the losing end. In our house, all are guests, everyone is welcome, and no one is allowed to be a predator. All we ask of our guests is that they be "nice" to each other. And when this is happening, so much more than basic needs are being met. There is a real community being formed where strong relationships are built and a kind of neighborhood poor people's social club thrives. We DMCW community members could

not be more blessed and grateful that they let us serve them and get to know them as our friends and family. It really is a beautiful place to experience ...

PLEASE GIVE GENEROUSLY ... We need you. More importantly, our guests need you.

Please see "Des Moines Catholic Worker Annual Expenses" chart on page 8 for more detail about the community's financial needs.



Chuck Trapkus

where between fifty to one hundred people on the days we are open.

Saturday "Free Food Store" at Trinity United Methodist Church

Every Saturday we have what we call a "Free Food Store" at Trinity United Methodist Church, which is about three blocks north of us, at 10 a.m. We get the bulk of this food from Capital City Fruit in Norwalk, Iowa – God Bless the Comitos! They've been giving us fruits and vegetables for over twenty years! We often also supplement the "Free Food Store" with a free breakfast around 9:30 a.m. provided by DMCW members.

We could not do this amazing amount of work without hours on hours of volunteer help both from live-in community members and outside volunteers!

via pacis

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LAYOUT

Aaron Jorgensen-Briggs

SUBSCRIPTIONS

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THE DES MOINES CATHOLIC WORKER COMMUNITY

The Des Moines Catholic Worker Community, founded in 1976, is a response to the Gospel call to compassionate action as summarized by the Catholic Worker tradition.

We are committed to a simple, nonviolent lifestyle as we live and work among the poor. We directly serve others by opening the Dingman House as a drop-in center for those in need of food, clothing, toiletries, use of a phone, toilet, shower, or just a cup of coffee and conversation. We also engage in activities that advocate social justice.

BECOMING A DES MOINES CATHOLIC WORKER

We are open to new community members. For information about joining our mission, contact any community member or visit our website: www.dmcatholicworker.org.

MAILING ADDRESS

Des Moines Catholic Worker
PO Box 4551
Des Moines IA 50305

BISHOP DINGMAN HOUSE

(Drop-in Center and Business Phone)
1310 7th St.
Des Moines, IA 50314
515-243-0765
Residents: Gilbert Landolt, Al Burney, Jake Fee, Vlad (a cat)

PHIL BERRIGAN HOUSE

713 Indiana Ave.
Des Moines, IA 50314
515-282-4781
frank.cordaro@gmail.com
Residents: Frank Cordaro, Bob Cook, Daniel & Phillip (cats)

RACHEL CORRIE HOUSE

1301 8th St.
Des Moines, IA 50314
515-330-2172
Residents: Julie Brown, Aaron Jorgensen-Briggs, Gracie (cat)

CHELSEA MANNING HOUSE

1317 8th St.
Des Moines, IA 50314
515-777-2180
Residents: Norman Searah, Ed Bloomer, Annie Patton, Charlie Faraday, Celestino Ramirez, Ms. Kitty (a cat)

WEEKLY COMMUNITY LITURGY

Wednesdays, 3:00 p.m. Berrigan House.
All are welcome. Call to confirm.

MONTHLY VETERANS FOR PEACE MEETING

Berrigan House. For more information, contact Gil Landolt at peacevet@hotmail.com or call 515-333-2180.

WEEKLY AA MEETING

Fridays, 5:00 pm, Berrigan House

THE CHIAPAS PROJECT

Chiapas, Mexico
Richard Flamer
flamerrichard@hotmail.com



As for ourselves, we must be meek, bear injustice, malice, and rash judgment. We must turn the other cheek, give up our cloak, go a second mile.
-Dorothy Day

Letters

Hello everybody!

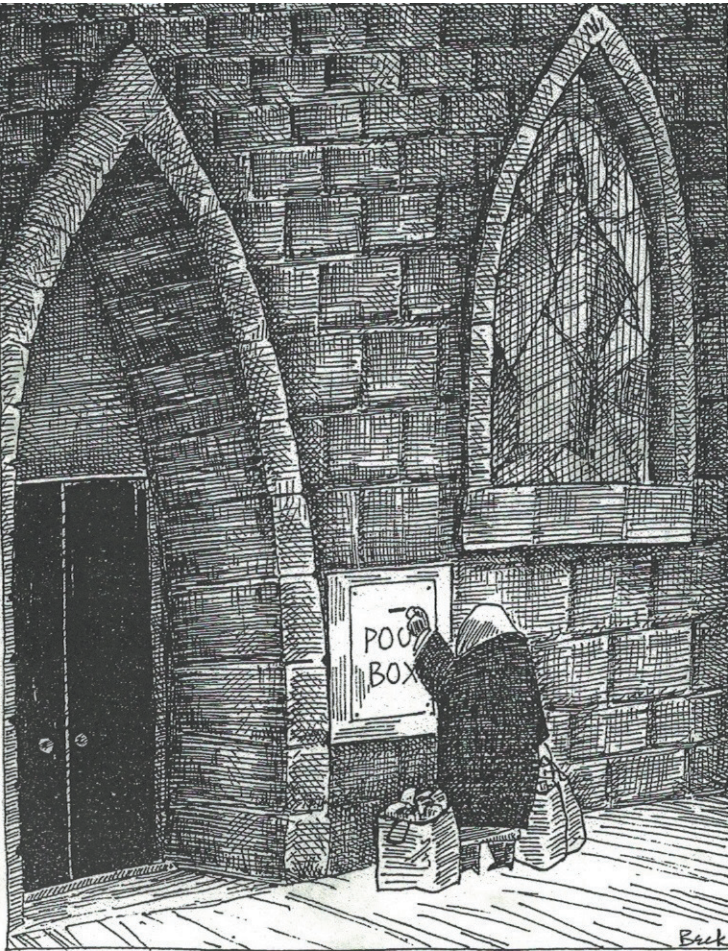
I read the latest *via pacis* while eating my (late) supper. Your paper came in the mail today, and I read that you need a new freezer. Enclosed is my check that will help a little.

I know about appliances becoming obsolete or just quit working. I moved from the farm (after Francis died) to a condo in Fairfield in December 2009. The group of condos were built 12 years before I got here. One couple lived in my unit from the time it was built until I moved in. I think all appliances were original equipment. In the last three years I have had to replace the wall-mount microwave, the kitchen range, the dishwasher and the refrig-freezer combo. Only things I haven't had to replace (yet) are washer and dryer and the furnace. Who's next??? Oh, and water heater.

All is well in Fairfield. Hang in there. I had right hip replaced October 2016. It works fine.

Peace to all,

Teresa Mottet



Thank you for your gift Teresa, and for your letter. Our community is deeply grateful. We couldn't do this work without you! We wish you a very Merry Christmas! And better luck with your appliances!

Hi Frank,

Always good to receive the *via pacis* and keep in touch with what the Catholic Worker is doing, will do, has done.

The Dakota Access Pipeline truly affects this entire nation! Thanks for your efforts on behalf of Native Americans who tried so hard to save what is rightly theirs. As long as Trump is in the WH everything looks to be going down down.

I hope you get some help for your CW homes. Wish I could send more but my grandson, his wife and children AND their three large Labrador dogs are moving in with me – he and she have jobs at U of I hospital! and I'll be 90 years in December! and still working part time.

Peace,

Lara Morrison

Thank you Lara, for your support. We are all in this together. The community of volunteers and donors who make our work possible is a source of hope and strength for us, and we hope you feel that, too. Wishing you and your family all the gifts of the season!

DMCW Volunteer & Donor Appreciation Party!

What: DM Catholic Worker Open House & Volunteer Appreciation Party
When: Sat. Jan 6 @ 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.
Where: Bishop Dingman House, 1310 7th St.

Our 40 years of service and resistance at the Des Moines Catholic Worker would not have been possible without the generosity of a broad network of supporters who have contributed labor, money, food, clothing and other material support towards the operation of Dingman House and the wellbeing of our many guests. We could not do this work without you.

To express our thanks, we will be hosting a party at the DMCW on January 6th, from 4 to 7 p.m. We will provide refreshments and music, and community members will be around to give tours and talk about our work. We are also extending this invitation to anyone interested in learning more about the Des Moines Catholic Worker. Please join us!

Visit the DMCW Web Page

<http://dmcatholicworker.org>

PLUS! 40 years of *via pacis* archives are now available on the Internet! Please find the v.p. archives at:

<https://viapacis.wordpress.com/>

And! Photo gallery of 40 years worth of v.p. covers here: <http://bit.ly/2AEaGMK>

Feast of the Holy Innocents

December Witness at Des Moines Drone Command

What: Feast of the Holy Innocents / Faith & Resistance Retreat & Witness @ Des Moines Drone Command Center
When: Dec 27-28, 2017
Where: Des Moines Catholic Worker – 1310 7th St. & IA National Guard Drone Command Center, 3100 McKinley Ave.

When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. (Matt. 2:16)

Wednesday, December 27
3 p.m. – Bible Study: Matthew’s Christmas story with Frank Cordaro
5 p.m. – Supper
7 p.m. – Report from Hancock Airfield, Syracuse NY

Anti-Drone Campaign & Christian Peacemaker Teams Iraqi Kurdistan Project with New York Catholic Worker Brian Hynes and Des Moines Catholic Worker Julie Brown
Brian Hynes is a longtime NYC CW with a long history of faith-based, nonviolent direct action peace work all over the East Coast. In recent years, Brian has witnessed at the drone base at Hancock Airfield in Syracuse NY. He and three other activists were acquitted last March for their “Big Books” action at Hancock.
Des Moines Catholic Worker Julie Brown has just completed her second year of work with Christian Peacemaker Teams in Iraqi Kurdistan. Julie can share her firsthand experience of being with the people on the other end of our armed drone warfare, the victims.

Thursday, December 28
8:30 a.m. – Liturgy with Fr. Carl Kabat
9:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. – Reflection and direct-action planning
11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. – Lunch
1:30 p.m. – Witness and direct action at entrance of IA National Guard Drone Command Center

All are welcome in the Spirit of Christmas, nonviolence and peace ...
If you need a bed, call ahead. If you want floor space, bring a bedroll.

For more info contact:
DMCW – Frank Cordaro
frank.cordaro@gmail.com (515) 490-2490
DM Veterans for Peace – Gilbert Landolt
peacevet@hotmail.com (515) 333-2180



Charles Mertes

Sometimes We Eat Sweets

By Julie Brown

Iraqi Kurdistan is about as different as I thought it would be from my midwest community in the United States. When people think of Iraq often the vision of war is the first picture that comes to mind. War is a reality here after a long history of colonization, civil war, occupation, dictatorship and the west dumping mass amounts of weapons into this region. This is what I thought I would take away from my time with Christian Peacemaker Teams in Iraqi Kurdistan. But life here is not all about war and despair. Quite the opposite... Kurdish culture has taught me to really try to enjoy the good things in life.
Driving through a city there are ice-cream shops everywhere. Men stand on corners next to roasting pots of fresh nuts and talk about their day. People gather in neighborhood grocery shops to watch television and share stories. Women shop in fabric stores filled with the brightest fabrics I have ever seen. There is community and beauty everywhere.
On weekends there are weddings and people dancing in open places in the countryside. When someone passes away it is common for a street to be closed in front of the house and huge tents put in the road for family and friends to pay their respects.
When visiting a home we eat sweets and celebrate life. The table is laid with baklava or local fruits. Freshly washed grapes. Cucumbers, oranges or pomegranates full of sweet deep red seeds bursting with juice. There is a saying about eating pomegranate here. “If you lose one seed, you lose paradise.”

Then there is tea. Small fragile glasses each with their own plate and tiny spoon. Tea with sugar. So much tea.
When I first arrived here I heard it was part of the culture



to bring sweets or fruits to a home that you were visiting. I didn’t think it was more than a friendly gesture. Now I see that it is much more. A carefully made piece of pastry from the local sweet shop may contain more than five different distinct layers. A grape from the vines in Dupre is unlike anywhere in the world. Honey from the small villages in the Quandil mountains is the purest honey you have ever tasted in your life. When you give sweets, you are giving a little taste of joy.
So I think that the Kurdish people have it figured out. In a place where things can feel so uncertain, they have shown me that sharing life with all its joys and sorrows is what matters.

Julie Brown is a member of Christian Peacemaker Teams’ Iraqi Kurdistan Project. She splits her time between Iraq and the Des Moines Catholic Worker as a member of DMCW’s Rachel Corrie Project.

An Encounter With an Old Friend

By Frank Cordaro

We got a surprise visit last month from Mike Smith. Mike was the fourth Catholic Worker to join our community. His name appears in the community list in the April 1977 issue of the via pacis along with me, Joe DaVia and Ed Polich. Mike came with two friends from Bloomington IN, where Mike has lived with his wife Ann Deitchman, who he met here at the DMCW. Ann joined the community soon after Mike arrived. Mike and Ann had five girls, raised them and sent them all to college! Over the years I kept up with the family through their annual yearend report at Christmas time.

Mike and his two buddies were on their way to the Black Hills in South Dakota to fulfill a “Bucket List” item of Mike’s. Mike could not get out of the car. He is suffering from the last stages of Parkinson’s disease. Mike could not talk either. He communicated with a notepad, with much difficulty. I did all the talking, miraculously remembering a lot of what happened back then. We hugged several times.

Mike’s buddies told me Mike had become a well-known playwright and had several of his plays performed in Bloomington. This does not surprise me. Mike was a great writer when he was in our community. Below is his first effort, written 40 years ago in the April 1977 issue of the v.p.

THE LAST BEGGAR

A very long time ago, when I was quite young and small, I did a thing, no great big thing, but still a thing that lives within me though I am no longer young and small. I had short, short hair; my father always wore a hat; a dime bought twinkies; and we ate dinner at grandpa’s every Sunday. Russia

Poems from the Brink of Despair

Annelies Klinefelter is a member of Christian Peacemaker Teams based in Lesbos, Greece. This summer he compiled poetry written by people living in the Moria refugee camp. In his blog, he writes:

“The camps near Mytilene (in the south of Lesbos) are filling up because of the steady influx of people – between 50-100 a day. Because of this a camp was opened in the north where mostly the refugees have been arriving. In an effort to counteract this influx the authorities arrange weekly deportations, sending about 8-15 people back to Turkey against their will. There is no love for the EU-Turkey deal here.

I talked with some of the refugees. They are desperate. One man was telling me about self-mutilation and even suicides. The refugees come from all over the world: Iraq, Congo, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and many others places.

Tuesday June 21, 2017 was International Refugee Day. On Lesbos there was an event where detained refugees from Moria were allowed to speak. They read beautiful poems that they had written that reflect their pains.”

Prisoner

I don’t know where I come from,
But they call me refugee.
I’m imprisoned in Moria — deprived of my liberty.
There are men, women and children, all desperate,
Crying in unison: “We are prisoners.”

This ceremony is not enough to make me smile.

Norman’s Whereabouts

By Norman Searah

Hello there! To begin with, I believe that all of us are Americans no matter what race, colors, languages, our religions or our histories.

Even the Native American Indians that I don’t see in Des Moines, I learned a lot in the past as much as now

We have a lot of people that have no jobs, which is mostly wanted for the poor all around this country of ours. Even maybe for the poor in Des Moines that are camped out by the river and maybe in shelters.

In Pine Ridge I don’t know what the unemployment is now. The last I learned it was 91%. The biggest tourist attraction that a lot of people go to in South Dakota is Mount Rushmore. In the early days it was sacred land to the Lakota Indians until gold was found and it was taken from the Lakota.

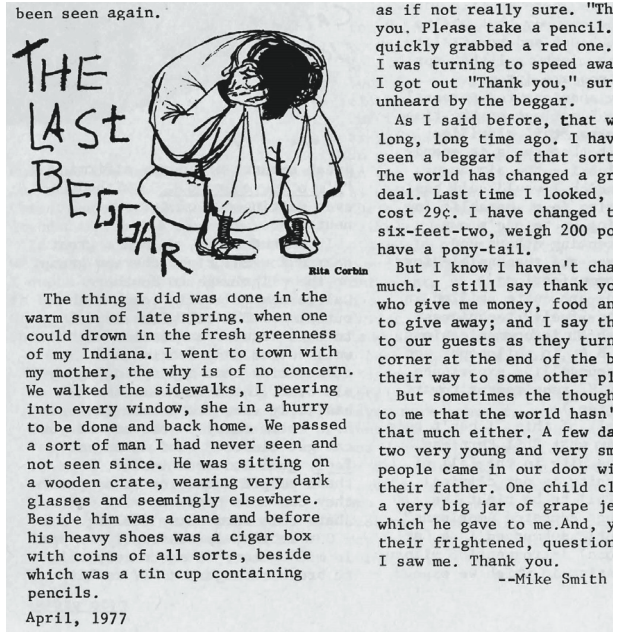
I don’t know what the unemployment is in Iowa and how many are living on the streets, in camps and in shelters. This Christmas holiday, which I don’t celebrate, I’ll be thinking about the poor and the Indians.

They will also be in my prayers and thoughts along with Julie Brown and Sheri Clemons who comes here to visit her father, Tom, and us. I don’t have a family. It’s broken up. They’re in my thoughts. People in the house are family, and the Catholic Worker.

I often think and dream of going to Drake University to watch a game with Native American Indians from a Native American Indian college nearby. Even take part in field and track and do the same. Even a high school in Des Moines

was the enemy; a general was the president; television was no novelty; and Willie Mays made catches the like of which have not been seen again.

The thing I did was done in the warm sun of late spring, when one could drown in the fresh greenness of my Indiana.



I went to town with my mother, the why is of no concern. We walked the sidewalks, I peering into every window, she in a hurry to be done and back home. We passed a sort of

I long to be free, like Mohamed Ali in the ring,
The walls of Moria are the nightmares in my sleep.
UNHCR is aware; I’m saying nothing new.

To cross the borders of Moria, you have to be vulnerable.
Human Rights? No! Not for those who came here over the water.
A dozen people froze in Moria during the winter cold.
No guilty party. Only excuses. No justice. We are the uncivilized ones.

We want to register our names and file as refugees, but alas,
in the asylum office we are merely migrants.

Proud to be vulnerable

When they talk about Hitler,
it’s not because he was good.
Look at UNHCR,
I will tell you what nobody knows.

In Moria, refugees are proud to be sick.
I broke my arm to get a medical certificate.

If you have been tortured you can sell yourself as vulnerable.
Being mentally ill is the price to pay for safe passage.
It’s easier for a sinner to enter paradise
than for a refugee to get asylum in Greece.

Why do you, all the guilty ones,



playing a fair game. Maybe it would give the players a chance to play with someone who is American. Maybe even eat with them to know them and realize they are people too.

I go to the international food store to shop for a few things. I eat a few egg rolls with a glass of water. I can’t drink Coke or any other Diet Coke either, doctor’s orders. When I eat I enjoy hearing people talk in their language anywhere.

I believe we should end all war, all hate and crimes. We need to work together. By listening to each other no matter who we

man I had never seen and not seen since. He was sitting on a wooden crate, wearing very dark glasses and seemingly elsewhere. Beside him was a cane and before his heavy shoes was a cigar boxwith coins of all sorts, beside which was a tin cup containing pencils.

We walked on by. A few store windows down I tugged Mom’s dress and quietly asked for a coin. “Why” “To put in his box.” I received the quarter with “thank-you” and ran back to this strange man. I was frightened, not knowing what to do or what to expect. I dropped the quarter in the box. I stood huffing and puffing, as much from fear as from exertion. The man looked at me kindly, but in a funny way, as if not really sure. “Thank you. Please take a pencil.” I quickly grabbed a red one. As I was turning to speed away, I got out “Thank you,” surely unheard by the beggar.

As I said before, that was a long, long time ago. I haven’t seen a beggar of that sort since. The world has changed a great deal. Last time I looked, twinkies cost 29 cents. I have changed too. I’m six-feet-two, weigh 200 pounds and have a ponytail.

But I know I haven’t changed that much. I still say thank you to those who give me money, food and clothes to give away; and I say thank you to our guests as they turn the corner at the end of the block on their way to some other place.

But sometimes the thought comes to me that the world hasn’t changed that much either. A few days back two very young and very small people came in our door with their father. One child clutched a very big jar of grape jelly, which he gave to me. And, yes, in their frightened, questioning eyes, I saw me. Thank you.

Want to teach us lessons in morality?
You prevent us from being happy.
Us, the brave ones.

Moria Apocalypse

We survived the snow, we slept on the ground.
There were no exhibitions, no statements in the press.

My stay in Moria will never be a text from a novel.
Classify Moria as a sect if you talk about religion.

What upset you in this message? Did something?
I will paint you a picture of all my nightmares.
Don’t talk to me about all the crimes happening in Africa.
I’m asking you to talk about everything that’s going on in this island.

The stress,
The psychosis,
The mental routine.
Pain and desolation
Shroud the corridors in the hospital.

I thought Greece was a welcoming country,
But to get into the system here one must fit through the eye of a needle.

UNHCR is a thorn that digs into our wounds.
EASO is only an agency for discrimination in Greece.

are.

No matter how much wealth we have, we all need some kind of help. We all in a way are also poor in other ways and need to talk about those things.

We need to pass this world to the young. A Native American proverb.

I thank you,

Norman

Caesar’s Question and Jesus’ Answer

By Frank Cordaro

This article was originally published in the November 1977 issue of via pacis.

When I see the man without work on the bum, I often ask myself, “why?” When I see the woman on the street afraid to go home for fear of being beaten up by her boyfriend, I ask myself, “why?”

In a Catholic Worker House of Hospitality, asking “why?” is about as traditional as dishing out a bowl of soup in a soup line. It is an integral part of the movement. We ask a wide range of questions: Why is there unemployment? Why are people so violent with each other? Why are there not enough homes to live in? Why do people eat so poorly in this country? Why is education so poor for some citizens? Why is health care so expensive? Why do people pay more and get less? Why don’t people own anything anymore but simply possess things on credit? Such questions are unending. However it is the point of view from which you ask the question that determines the answer.

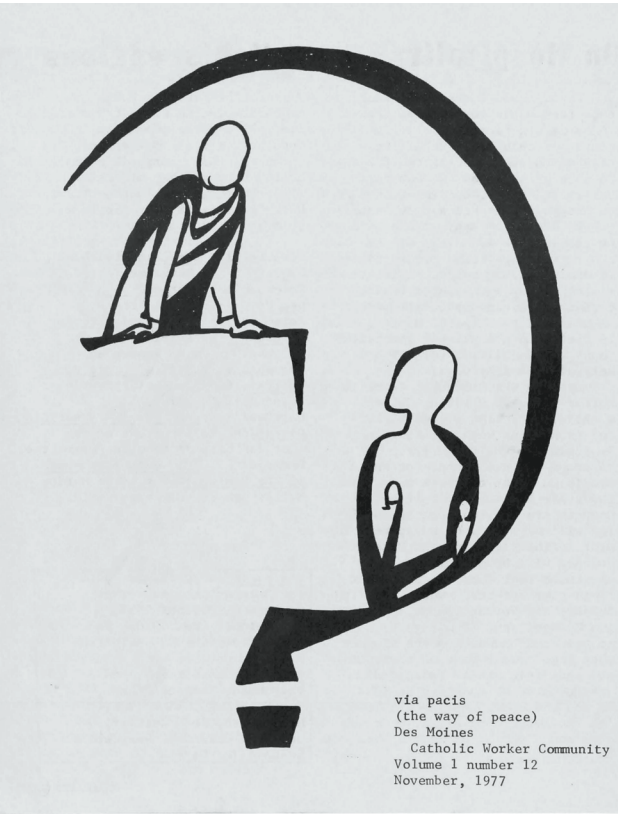
Today, just as in former days, the dominant questions being asked are the questions of Caesar, i.e., the state, the bureaucracy, yes, even the institutional church. What is the problem? What are the statistics which prove there is a problem? What projects or programs can we create to solve the problem? How are the majority going to be reached? How much unemployment is necessary for a healthy economy? And so on.

Caesar’s questions are posed in such a way that man is required to answer them through his own power. “We will create jobs through government programs.” “We will create housing projects to give people homes.” “We will make laws to protect property and secure peace.” “We will create a Federal Food Regulatory Commission.” “We will pass laws for Equal Educational Opportunities.” “We will develop a Welfare System to meet the needs of the folks who ain’t making it in our system and we will exploit their needs to make our system work better by doling out to them just enough federal dollars to keep them consuming.” Caesar’s questions and answers for the poor and needy in our society keep them stagnant or make them progressively worse off than they were before. At the same time, those people who truly wish to help the poor are kept far away from them, their power is diffused by red tape, and they are lost in the rationalizations of Caesar’s own questions and answers.

Caesar’s questions allow for the whole host of half truths that historically plagued mankind. The rationalization behind war is perhaps Caesar’s greatest achievement. War is a necessary evil which weighed against certain perceived alternatives is a good. “If we don’t clobber the other guy, he’ll clobber us.” “If we don’t take to arms, our loved ones will be destroyed.” “Existence under tyranny is no existence at all.” Even the Church has joined Caesar to explain that in certain cases (those occasions that MY country deem fit) war is the only moral thing to do. “Our” war is a “just” war. The “Double Effect” theory: our act of violence will produce two effects – one bad and one good. The Good from our act will far outweigh the bad, e.g., thirty-two years ago the

atom bomb was dropped on the city of Hiroshima and at least 100,000 people were killed in a few seconds, but the war ended. And so it goes until we reach the nuclear standoff of our own day. However, in our day both sides can destroy each other totally. Do Caesar’s rationalizations make any sense now? How is it that the Churches have not joined together to outlaw all modern warfare, especially since all our medieval rationalizations no longer apply? How is it that when the Pope speaks to Catholics, he can initiate countless arguments centering around countless subjects, but when he speaks out against nuclear proliferation, his is merely a voice crying out in the wilderness?

I believe that much of the modern Christian’s dilemma has its roots in the kind of questions being asked. The Jesus



we see in scripture seems very strange and distant to us. We do not know how to read and pray over scripture. Therefore we find ourselves straining to make a strange Jesus answer our questions for us. Many well-intentioned Christians try to answer Caesar’s questions with this strange Jesus’ answers and come up wanting.

The scriptural Jesus’ answer calls for some very specific questions – questions rooted in God and Salvation History and the people of Israel. Jesus is the answer to the questions of the Old Testament, plus he is a new question in his own right. There are givens in these questions – things that cannot be part of the questions. There is a God and we – all of us – are called to be his people. We do have choice, yet what has happened, what is happening and what will happen is

GRACE.

Our question now is how are we to respond to our God? – no longer a God “out there,” but Emmanuel, “God with us!” Jesus has helped us refine the question by moving us from our “how” to his “Who?” (see Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Christ the Center).

“How?” is a dangerous question because it can so easily become a Caesar question – a question which allows human beings to have an answer of their own making. In Jesus we can no longer be misled into a Caesar question. The Jesus question is “Who do you say that I am?” (Mk. 8:27; Mt. 16:15; Lk. 9:20). Serious searching for our answer to this question will always keep us on the right track. When the question is “who?” we look for a person, not a program. We look for the person of Jesus rather than a doctrine. And the truth is no further than the person with whom we are in contact. Caesar will never see the truth in persons because he is asking the wrong question. It is no accident that at Jesus’ trial Pilate asked Jesus, “What is truth?” (Jn. 18:38). Pilate, a local Caesar, asked “What is truth?” with TRUTH – the person of Jesus – standing right in front of him. Caesar will always be blind, and we cannot expect anything else since in Caesar “he” has become “it.”

Today we need to ask the question, “Who is Jesus?” afresh in the light of the scriptures. This is not a task to be completed but an ongoing journey of personal encounter. Since Jesus is PERSON, then in all persons there is a Jesus (Mt. 25:31-46). If our encounter with him is to be true it must be done in a relationship of brothers and sisters – not an “I – It” or “Staff – Client” or “Us – Them” or “Master – Slave” relationship.

If we keep the focus of our efforts in meeting others as brothers and sisters, many of Caesar’s rationalizations fall apart. We do not give substandard housing to a sister. We do not give poor education to brothers and sisters. We do not keep our brothers unemployed. We do not allow our sister to die alone in a county poor house. We do not let children (and all children are our children) wait in overcrowded poor people’s clinics to be treated inadequately. At least, if we call ourselves the People of God, we cannot let any of the above happen, especially if our needs are being met, and not do anything. The needs of the least are the needs of Jesus still suffering in our brothers and sisters, and still waiting to receive from us the simple, basic necessities of human life. But we must remind ourselves constantly that Caesar’s questions and answers for the poor and needy, indeed for any person, are no answers at all, since they involve no encounter with persons, no encounter with Jesus. Furthermore, if we see all people and relate to them as brothers and sisters, there is no way we can justify blowing them off the face of the earth in a so-called “Just War.”

Jesus’ question “Who do you say that I am?” is a journey and all of us are called to go on it. It is a real journey that carries with it all the responsibilities of any true relationship. We must try to meet our brothers and sisters in the truth of their beings and begin to act responsibly toward them – not as commodities to be exploited but as persons to be loved.

Saint Cyprian’s Conversion

By Jake Fee

The stories of the conversion of Saint Cyprian of Antioch name him as a powerful pagan magician – skilled in the calling and dismissing of spirits, and a great healer and vexer of men. On a mission to seduce a Christian princess, Cyprian is said to have used his most powerful love potion in an attempt to capture her attraction.

I came to the Catholic Worker this autumn, seeking knowledge of service and compassion. I thought myself skilled (or, at least, successfully apprenticed) in civil disobedience and service to my community. Drawing upon my time in the Pacific Northwest and in the various countries I’ve been lucky enough to visit, I dove into the Worker community to share in the work of creating a home where, the mantra goes, it is easier to be good.

What I’ve found has blown my socks off. I have never said the Lord’s Prayer before now, and yet I find it gives me strength and inspiration. I have never heard anyone so believe in the power of direct protest, and yet I can already feel how actions can truly make this world more like the paradise we all strive for. I have never lived in a house so full of love... and here I am, lucky enough to be part of this work, and strong enough to give all that I can.

Cyprian’s tale of conversion climaxes with this: the Christian princess traces a cross over her hexed drink, and the spell – despite Cyprian’s power and wisdom – crumbles beneath the strength of her faith. At once, Cyprian converts, and never again doubts the power of a Christian’s will.

I feel similarly overwhelmed. My so-far short time at the Worker has shown me a glimpse of the power all people are capable of wielding. Power that comes only through love, expressed only through good works, nurturing only the highest and bravest morals that we should all strive towards.

I hope to stay with the community for a long time. I feel welcomed, and truly at home. I’ve never cooked or cleaned with more love in my life!



To Cyprian the Saint, I say, thank you for your example! To the Workers who have welcomed me into their community, I cannot thank you enough! To all the folks who work for a

better world, I say, Amen!





Chuck Gregory broadcasting "The New American Dream Radio Show" from Berrigan House, Nov. 16th. Chuck and his wife Lorraine visited the DMCW last month from Florida. Frank Cordaro has been a weekly guest on Chuck and Mike Palecek's The New American Dream Radio Show since 2011.



Al Burney, Gil Landolt and Pam Warner, Gil's sister, holding the quilt Pam was giving to Al at Berrigan House at the December meeting of the DM Veterans for Peace. Each year, Pam makes a quilt she gives to a veteran. This year she gave her quilt to honor Al for all the great work he does at the Catholic Worker and with VFP.



Thank yous to Frank's cousins Lee and Larry Hawk, pictured above holding a bag full of donations from the St. Anthony's Altar and Rosary Society. Lee asked her St. Anthony's Altar and Rosary Society to donate blankets and towels to the Catholic Worker. A couple days later, Frank filled our cargo van with donated blankets and towels! Frank took the above photo of his cousins standing by a statue of Mary at St. Anthony's, Frank's home parish.



Charles Mertes has been faithfully washing dishes three days a week at the Des Moines Catholic Worker for several years now. Charlie is also a talented artist. Please see his illustration on page 3 of this issue!



Update on Jessica Reznicek and Ruby Montoya: Jess and Ruby are on an extended leave. There are no charges against them. They are doing what Jess calls "spiritual work." We hold them in our hearts and assure them of our continued love and support and pray you join us in doing the same.

How I Became a Catholic Worker Somehow: Part 1

By Aaron Jorgensen-Briggs

I'm not Catholic. And I'm kind of lazy. I like hobbit stuff. Smoking, and eating, and poems, and parties. Long walks and guitars.

Nonetheless, this spring it will be six years that I have been living and working at the Des Moines Catholic Worker. An unexpected journey that has fostered growth and presented challenges I couldn't possibly have foreseen. And life is busy here – until now, I haven't paused to reflect, to consider the shape of it all, to tell a story.

In 2011, I moved from New York City, where I'd been living for seven years, back to Des Moines, my hometown. I'd completed my original purpose in going to New York, written poetry and earned a degree, and found myself (again) adrift and unsettled, full of deep unanswered questions.

I've lived my entire adult life without a plan. Have never really had much in the way of foresight, no vision of the future, no trajectory that I could recognize. I've always experienced myself and the world more in terms of inspiration and opportunity, always unpredictable. Doors suddenly opening, new possibilities, new experiences to try out. It's how I'd gotten to New York in the first place.

The summer of 2011 was one of those moments. At the tail end of a broken marriage, unemployed and unpublished (woe is me!), I'd come to Des Moines for a visit, to celebrate birthdays with my brother, and felt the first stirring of the sort of feeling that leads to a choice.

It seemed Des Moines had grown a lot in the years I'd been away. Birthday time was full of music, and new friendships, and there was a lot more city to explore. I had fun. It was stimulating. The sort of things I'd enjoyed in New York, but without the intensity, the constant pressure of close quarters with millions of people driven by survival or ambition. And I had family here, familiar ground to stand on.

So maybe that's one way of explaining it, my choice to move back. All those things. Then again, in such moments of decision, I've always just had this feeling, just that, a feeling, a bit mysterious and undefinable, a touch of clarity I can't explain or really understand. So I had a feeling, and I filled a truck with instruments and books, put my cat in a crate, and moved.

That was August. In September, Occupy Wall Street happened. And suddenly I was confused again. Because, seeing those events unfold, I felt something too, something faint but clear. But I had just left that place. So what was going on? Here, alone with my cat and my books in my new apartment, living off unemployment, trying to make progress on a novel ... And there they were suddenly, the Occupiers, giving clear voice to something I too had always recognized, deep within myself. That human society should serve the needs of the many, not the few. That allowing greed to be the driving force and organizing principle of all human activity is catastrophically destructive, hostile to life, distorted, wrong. And that something could be done about it. That we could choose to fight. I thought maybe I wanted to fight, too.

So one day in October, when I got a Facebook message from an old friend saying that there had been a meeting, that five hundred people had shown up at the Capitol to discuss Occupy, and that a bunch had stayed, vowing not to be moved, and that the State Troopers had promised to arrest anyone still present at the 10 p.m. curfew, and that more people were needed to come observe and support, I called my brother, and we agreed to go down there. To observe and support.

But when we arrived, a little before 10, and stepped into

that crowd, when we heard all those voices, in unison – WHOSE PARK? PEOPLE'S PARK! ... WE! ARE! THE 99 PERCENT! – I heard a kind of song: about the undefeatable human spirit, about the power of common people to join together and fight for a better world, a world where we recognize each other as brothers and sisters, where we care for each other and the planet we know to be our common home and source of life, full of simple beauty ... I heard that, and something in me began to answer back.

My brother heard it too. It was 10 pm. Flashing lights. We looked at each other. We sat down.

That was how I first met the Catholic Workers. In the police wagon that night. Then all night in Polk County Jail.



Aaron Jorgensen-Briggs under arrest during Occupy Des Moines Protest, December 2011.

One thing led to another. Before long, I had abandoned my Great American Novel and was working fulltime on Occupy. Making new friends. Learning to organize. We made a camp. We held it. We got in the street. We got creative. Painted our faces and staged a circus outside the media circus of the presidential debate at Drake University. It was caucus time. We held our own caucus, the People's Caucus. Split into preference groups to show not who we wanted to vote for, but who we wanted to protest (all of them).

Thousands of people participated, in all sorts of ways. Day in, day out. We did everything we could think of. All over the country this was happening. We brought our protest everywhere. To the Republicans. To the Democrats. To the

banks. The corporations. The governor, the city council. Odd things happened. A Norwegian film crew followed us around all day the day we interrupted Chris Christie's speech at Kum & Go headquarters. We got infiltrated (a FOIA request later confirmed). It got really cold. People accustomed to homelessness taught the rest of us how to survive.

All the while, the Catholic Workers. They fed people. They did all the dishes. They trained us in nonviolent civil disobedience, and they were always on the line when it was time for action.

And they talked to me. It was a simple message. *This Occupy moment will not last forever*, they said. *But have you ever thought about making this your life?* You could join a community, they said. Where people try to live simply. Where people try to put care for others at the center. Where we feed people, and try to make them feel welcome. Where we try to recognize the humanity in every individual. Where resistance to oppression is what organizes our lives. Where we try to change the systems and structures that put people on the street, that destroy the planet, that eat away at our hearts and minds.

And they were right of course. All over the country, the wave broke, fell back. People were brutalized and camps destroyed. Here in Des Moines, on Valentine's Day, we chose to pull up stakes, and some began working in other ways. Because these moments don't last forever. They become other moments, and sometimes people are changed in the process, and find new ways to keep going, moving forward in all directions. Those who had come to the Occupy camp from the street went back to the street.

So there I was again in my apartment. And I had to do something, choose a direction. It was a nice apartment. Old building downtown, high ceilings, huge windows. My unemployment was running out. To keep it I would have to find work. Maybe across the street, at Wells Fargo, in that hive of cubicles I could see from my huge windows.

I did think about it. A long while. I had the privilege to do that, to deliberate on that kind of choice. I volunteered at the Catholic Worker, learning to cook in mass quantities, washing dishes. I began to meet guests, many of whom are still friends today. I began putting my language skills to work on this newspaper.

I remember a pivotal moment, sitting in the basement at Berrigan House, talking over my deliberations with Jessica Reznicek, who, like me, had joined Occupy, met the Catholic Workers ... and now she had decided to move in. I was very depressed. This has always been my clinical diagnosis, a lifelong challenge. And the end of Occupy plus a failed romance had hit me hard. For some reason, we got to talking about safety, feeling safe. And I suddenly realized that I had never really felt safe, and I said it out loud, possibly for the first time, to Jessica. A quiet moment of raw, honest expression. And she began to cry. Then I did.

Because she cared for me. She connected with my human experience, felt it. She wanted my happiness, wanted me to feel safe. She was my friend. And her friendship moved me. And that's what I saw reflected everywhere at the Catholic Worker. Simple human empathy, a community of people committed to working together to serve others, to bring more kindness into the world, more light. People committed to working and fighting, with all the weapons of nonviolence, to change the world, to make it better. They were full of a fierce and determined love. And I realized I wanted that, whatever it was. Something in me had begun to wake up. I moved in.

DMCW Annual Expenses

Des Moines Catholic Worker	Bishop Dingman 1310-7th	Chelsea Manning 1317-8th	Rachel Corrie 1301-8th	Monthly	Annually
Utilities	775.00	700.00	525.00	2,000.00	24,000.00
Pest Control	90.00	80.00	80.00	250.00	3,000.00
Supplies	200.00	50.00	-	250.00	3,000.00
Repairs	235.00	245.00	70.00	550.00	6,600.00
Real Estate Taxes	-	125.00	75.00	200.00	2,400.00
Total House Expenses	1,300.00	1,200.00	750.00	3,250.00	39,000.00

	Cargo Van	Passenger Van	Monthly	Annually
Van Expenses 2 Vans	250.00	150.00	400.00	4,800.00
Via Pacis 4 Issues per Year			900.00	10,800.00
Total 2017 Anticipated Expenses			4,550.00	54,600.00

DMCW Current Needs

Many of our guests at the Des Moines Catholic Worker are homeless and will be living outside all winter, in tents or on the streets. We are in urgent need of the following items:

- Sleeping bags and heavy blankets
- Winter coats
- Long underwear
- Wool socks
- Winter hats
- Gloves
- Candles
- Batteries
- Pads and tampons

In 2015 I Got Sick

By Charlie Faraday

In 2015 I got sick.

I didn't want to be sick. I wanted to do my job. I owned a company. I had a real storefront in the city. I was getting ready to launch a new product. I'd hired staff. My moping soon gave way to fear of not finding competent care, disease progression, losing my home, and eventually to the putrid, saccharin dread that, when staring into the void of their own demise, devours the ambitious and the lazy alike: I wasn't ready to go.

I laid off the staff, cancelled the product launch, and maxed out my personal and business credit cards paying for food, utilities, and gas driving the six-hour round trip to the closest doctors willing to treat me. I filed a complaint with the insurance commissioner when my insurance company dropped me illegally. I got new health insurance connected to my failing business at a 400% premium increase. I cried.

After the penetrating pain of major surgery, inexplicably untouched by a volume of opiates that shocked my pain management team, subsided enough for me to be able to leave the groove I'd carved in the sofa, a friend brought me to the Catholic Worker for groceries. My credit cards were maxed out and I couldn't afford enough food to recover well. I was afraid I'd be turned away or judged unworthy because I still had my pre-poverty wardrobe. I was shy, embarrassed, and hung to the back of the crowd, but I left with fresh green vegetables that tasted like hope. I started coming twice a week.

Gradually, I realized that the judgment I expected just wasn't there. I started talking to people, stayed to eat lunch, and played cribbage every Tuesday, which quickly became the highlight of my week. Al, the worker's resident gruff, papa bear Marine, took me under his wing and insisted (demanded?) I start volunteering. I met a community of people

who unabashedly claim who they are as flawed humans doing what they can to help their fellow man. There wasn't a shred of self-importance in anyone, just a desire to work hard. I want to do my job. I could do this job.

When I got sick again almost exactly a year later, had more major surgery, struggled with untouchable will-breaking pain, and had a closer view into the void, the now familiar dread was slightly eased by the worker community I'd found. I suspect most of them don't know how much clinging to the sight of their faces every week helped me stay away from the tarry suction of despair as I discovered body parts that didn't work right and questioned my ability to do my job ever again.

It's another year later, I've stayed healthy, and am moving into Manning House where I'll be joining an amazing family as a full community member. I can't speak on personal theology related to a calling, but I can say that somehow I know I'm where I should be. I'm looking forward to giving even more of my sweat, my stress, and my heart to this beautiful, flawed, amazingly impactful community.



Truth Speaks for Itself

By Frank Cordaro

This article was originally published in the December 1977 issue of via pacis.

Ken,

I want to say "Amen" to all the possible dangers that you expressed in your letter about my action in D.C. this summer. They are all very real and need to be looked at honestly and prayerfully. Although these dangers may be possible, they should not be the sole criteria as to whether or not an act should be done. There must be higher criteria – pointing to the truth is one. As you have indicated, responding to the Holy takes many forms; "poverty, prayer, sacrifice, humility, giving, joy, worship." And ultimately I agree with you that "one can only join the 'have-nots' in the spirit of Jesus as a response."

However, one is also obliged to be a bearer of Good News, a pointer to the truth. Truth is truth regardless of human motivation. It has a sort of ex opere operato effect regardless of who is its bearer. The one who points to truth has no control over the truth – the truth itself does its own work. Just as the Church is not the Kingdom, so too, the one who speaks (or acts) the truth is not the Truth itself but merely a pointer to it.

I truly believe that my act in D.C. this summer was a truth-pointing act. I do not claim pure motives. If pure motives

were needed to act, who among us could act? However mixed my motives, my act points to the truth that the Pentagon is a very violent place, and that we are reaping and shall continue to reap the fruit of that violence. This truth is shown not by the power of my action but by the power of the truth itself.

On the other hand, there is an inner aspect to this truth-pointing act. It points to the violent and killing truth that is within my own heart. Dan Berrigan says that nuclear weapons had to be in the heart of each one of us before they could be produced by the Pentagon. I need to point to this truth within myself just as I was drawn to point to the truth of the Pentagon outside myself. The act of going to the Pentagon and spilling blood on its pillars enabled me to reach the Pentagon that is within me. You are not far off when you say that, tactically speaking, I did not make a point with anyone but myself. In one sense that act was for no one except me. I claim it as a personal act. I feel no obligation to be a tactician for truth. Truth will take care of itself. However, I do feel an obligation to respond to the Holy as best I can. Part of my response is pointing to the truth I see – that truth which is both an interior and an exterior reality. Those who point to the truth must always remember that they are simply pointers – they are not truth itself. I claim no righteousness for myself. Insofar as my act was a truth-revealing act, it was completely dependent on truth to do its own bidding. That is why non-violence is a must – and in our world spilling blood on stone rather than dropping bombs on people is non-vio-

lent! To turn to violence would be a sure sign of lack of faith in the very truth I hope to reveal.

Unlike the actions of the Sixties, my act was not a political act primarily, but a spiritual act with meaning for myself and others who share this faith. The truth revealed is within the Pentagon and within me. But in both realms the truth itself is its own sanctifier. A faithless person has reason to despair at the truth of the Pentagon. Most people of our day choose not to see this truth, but hide from it or pretend it is not there.

It is only my faith in Jesus that allows me to point to the deepest violence within me which is symbolized by the Pentagon. As a believer, I know by faith that I can be saved, not by hiding from the Pentagons within me and outside of me, but by being faithful to the man Jesus. Therefore I disagree with your saying that by dramatizing the violence within me I "baptize and confirm" it. I admit that that is a possibility. However, there is another and greater possibility – the faith possibility. When, in faith, I dramatize the violence within me, I also claim it in truth and submit it to the transforming, redeeming power of Jesus.

It is at this point that the way of the C.W. allows me to respond to the Holy, to Jesus, in "poverty, prayer, sacrifice, humility, giving, joy and worship," and hopefully the continual courage to be a truth-pointer. I fail often in my response to the Holy. However, it is not the experience of success which sustains but my solid and certain faith in Jesus.

Frank



Good Friday, April 1985: Frank Cordaro kneeling and praying on Pentagon steps after blood-spilling witness. In 1984-85, while attending St. John's Seminary in Collegeville MN, Frank and others started a yearly Holy Week in Washington DC tradition at St. John's and St Benedict's colleges of students celebrating the last weeks of Jesus' life with the folks from Jonah House and the Atlantic Life Community in their annual Faith and Resistance Retreat. This tradition continues to this day!

“Teach Peace Not War” Report

By Frank Cordaro

Catholic Workers, Vets for Peace and members of Nebraskans for Peace were among the eight people who showed up on the sidewalk outside the Creighton University ROTC building at noon, Thursday, November 16, with a banner, posters and leaflets.

They were part of a nationwide campaign called “Teach Peace Not War!” that hopes to get the 17 U.S. Jesuit colleges and universities that host military training / ROTCs to kick them off their campuses. Creighton was one of ten Jesuit colleges and universities visited by peace activists November 16th in what organizers hope to be an annual event.

From the front of the ROTC building the peace activists marched around the campus on its public sidewalk to the front of the Jesuit Community building and the entrance circle of the campus. There we met Fr. Andy Alexander, SJ, Director of the Collaborative Ministry Office and Eileen Burke-Sullivan, Vice Provost for Mission and Ministry, both representing the Jesuit community and Creighton University. Both graciously listened to Mark Kenney’s reading of a leaflet and a letter addressed to the Jesuit Community of Creighton from the group.

At the end of Mark’s reading of the letter to the Jesuits, Mark handed Fr. Alexander a bucket of white paint labeled “JESUIT WHITEWASH” and said “Please accept this bucket of whitewash as a gentle reminder not to use it to conform to the world around you. May you never have need to open it again. May you advocate, with the zeal and authority of Jesus, to remove worldly military training centers from your Catholic campuses.”

For more info contact:

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For the “Teach War and Kill No More” national campaign:

BreakingtheSilence@nonviolentcow.org

<http://www.nonviolentworm.org/TeachWarNoMore/>



Mark Kenney reading statement to Fr. Andy Alexander, SJ, Director of Collaborative Ministry Office and Eileen Burke-Sullivan, Vice Provost for Mission and Ministry, both representing the Jesuit community and Creighton University. Mark is about to hand Creighton’s representatives a bucket of white paint with this message: “DON’T WHITEWASH THE GOSPELS.”



Twenty years ago in the Nov./Dec. 1997 issue of *via pacis*, we reported that Catholic Workers had staged an occupation of Marquette University’s ROTC building during an all-day conference sponsored by the Jesuit university celebrating Dorothy Day’s 100th birthday. The above photo taken by Frank appeared on p. 4 of the issue. In his article, “Dorothy Day Commemoration: Workers, Academics, Admirers Meet in Milwaukee,” Frank wrote: “Silly Jesuits! They should have known better than to invite a bunch of Catholic Workers to their campus and expect us to not demonstrate against the presence of ROTC!” Pictured (LtoR): Don Timmerman, Roberta Thurstin Brian Terrell, Ed Bloomer, Bill Frankel-Streit, Larry Morland, Jeremy Scahill.

2017 Occupy the World Food Prize Report

By Mike Miles

We live in an age of propaganda that is unparalleled in human history. The ability to use cyber technology to create professional looking, unvetted sources of “news and information” coupled with an overwhelming disparity of corporate finances available to pay for these disinformation mills has rendered truth a rare commodity indeed.

It is increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to influence public debate where critical thinking has been displaced by flashy infotainment productions and attention spans that require thoughts that are expressed in 280 characters. Social media is all about sharing headlines without reading the content.

Occupy the World Food Prize (OWFP) has made astonishing headway in this battle to “control the narrative” in the six years they have been in public spaces battling one of Iowa’s most powerful sacred cows. We are admittedly a rag-tag bunch of hopeful, enthusiastic street players who try our best not to let our passion get in the way of the facts. Seeking truth that is undisputable is at the core of the changes we desire to see as we engage our opponents in the court of public discourse.

Their Golden Calf is St. Norman Borlaug, a breeder of small grains who sincerely saw his work as an apolitical act of feeding hungry people. His Iowa roots have rendered him almost a god of mythic proportions to those who would promote their state as the Mecca of global, agricultural innovation. He could never have imagined his humanitarian intentions could be exploited by geo-political hucksters pushing a version of Empire that could care less about altruistic acts like feeding hungry people.

In a chance encounter on the streets in front of the Marriott Hotel, Kenneth Quinn, the president and chief promoter of the World Food Prize, came out to engage our objections to his world view by almost immediately launching into a lecture on St. Norman and how he saved more lives than any other individual in all of history. That is the fall back position of any criticism of their narrative of who does the best job feeding the world. The irony is that the World Food Prize doesn’t really do any hands on work to feed people, they simply call attention to individuals and organizations who say they feed the world better than anyone else.

Where this charade of self importance falls apart is, as one could imagine, in the funding of the organization itself. The list of their advisory council is a who’s who of all the major players in Industrial Agriculture and their underlings who haul in the billions of dollars to be made in their narrative of best agricultural practices. Their donors come from the same entities that advise them, creating a closed loop of scorn and ignorance of competing narratives that actually do a better job of feeding the world than they do.

The good news is, as Margaret Mead reminds us, that we should “never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world, indeed it is the only thing that ever has.” Six years after OWFP first took to the streets of Des Moines, a lawsuit they have filed against the State of Iowa and the World Food Prize is threatening their domination of what should be a more open, inclusive debate.

An immediate outcome of the lawsuit is that OWFP has taken back access to the Capitol grounds for their opposition rally. Previously we had been banned to a parking area across the street from the Capitol over one hundred yards away from where WFP participants enter the building for their red carpet, self congratulatory soiree.

Not only were we in plain view of the evening’s proceedings, but as our rally ended OWFP participants crossed the line labeled “private event, restricted area” and proceeded up the stairs to where Iowa State Patrol stood in front of locked doors restricting access to the interior of the building.

Twice they warned us if we moved forward beyond a randomly declared point we would be arrested. Both times we acknowledged the warning and proceeded to walk around them until we stood in front of one of the doors. The only explanation we can come up with is that the State Patrol must have been given instructions to leave us alone. We stayed for over two hours until the event ended and revelers began to leave the party.

This curious shift in how we were treated compared to previous years leads us to believe that the WFP is nervous about what may be illegal use of the building by them as a private party. The lawsuit argues that both the state and the privately-run foundation are responsible for alleged First Amendment violations in that they jointly plan, pay for and host the award ceremonies.

Iowa Department of Administrative Services policy prohibits private organizations from hanging signs from the Capitol building, its walls, lamp posts and trees, or doing anything that would suggest an endorsement by the state of Iowa. The WFP does all of this and more. But the lawsuit says Administrative Services nonetheless grants the use of the House of Representatives chambers for the award ceremony.

The state also provides the WFP foundation with the use of other Capitol facilities, allows the foundation to hang three giant banners from the Capitol that spell out “World Food Prize,” and has a written agreement with the foundation that calls for Iowa Public Television to broadcast the ceremony live. It is worth noting that, in their reporting of the event, IPT dismissed our presence at the Capitol as the objections of white, middle aged, male hippies. They clearly understand who butters their bread.

The lawsuit also alleges that the World Food Prize has been sponsored by the governor’s office and the Iowa Department of Economic Development, which entails an annual, standing appropriation of one million dollars, with the money to be paid out of the state’s general fund.

As we left the Capitol that evening a telling exchange with members of the Iowa State Patrol shed a ray of light on an otherwise puzzling evening. “We’ll see you next year unless the courts stop their use of the building for their party,” say we.

“I agree,” quipped one of the officers who has been arresting us every year since we began our resistance to this corporate/state love fest.

The World Food Prize should be worried that their party may be coming to an end. They are only one of many narratives about how to go about feeding 9 million people in the year 2050. They are not even the best narrative. They are the wealthiest, the most powerful, the most pandering, the most ecologically destructive narrative but that shouldn’t give them monopolistic, unfettered access to the State of Iowa’s democratic institutions and taxpayer funding to boot.

Agro ecology is the future of farming. The sooner the World Food Prize acknowledges this, the sooner the real work of feeding the world can begin. If they don’t change their approach, the realities of the natural world will eventually make them irrelevant. You can’t fool Mother Nature.



Locked out at the Capitol's front doors (LtoR): Erich Hayes, Mary Caponi, Mike Miles, Kaylynn Lee Strain, Maggie Rawland, Frank Cordaro, Patrick Bosolds, Sharon Donovan and Bob Eiden.

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Via pacis

The voice of the Des Moines Catholic Worker community

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HOW YOU CAN HELP

Prayers . . . without them, nothing happens.

VOLUNTEERS:

Monthly meal providers.
Individuals and work crews for hospitality (serving food, cleanup), cleaning and general inside and outside maintenance . . . without them, we burn out.

FOOD:

Salted Butter, Sugar, Coffee, Creamer, Salt, Pepper, Milk, Olive Oil, Fruit, Vegetables, Meat and Fish, Cheese, Juice (sugar free), Fresh Garlic, Salad Dressing, Soups and Stews (both canned and fresh). Leftovers from weddings, funerals and other social gatherings. . . .

HEALTH AND HYGIENE:

Feminine Hygiene Items, Candles, Ibuprofen, Multi-

vitamins, Antibiotic Ointment, Band-Aids, Lip Balm.

TOILETRIES:

Razors, Deodorant, Shaving Cream, Shampoo, Conditioner, Lotion, Soap, Toothpaste. (Small sizes preferred for handout . . .) Toothbrushes and Toilet Paper.

NEEDED CLOTHING:

Underwear, Socks, T-shirts, Sweatshirts, Hoodies, Coats, Work Pants. (All Sizes—especially big . . .) Sleeping Bags, Blankets, Pillows.

HOUSEHOLD

SUPPLIES:

Silverware, Dishes, Bleach, Laundry Detergent, Environmentally-Friendly Dish Soap, Murphy's Oil Soap, Pinesol,

Trash Bags, Brooms, Rugs, Candles, Energy-Efficient Light Bulbs, Aluminum Foil, Plastic Wrap, Sandwich and Freezer Bags, Bath Towels.

HOUSE REPAIRS:

With four old houses, there are plenty of projects large and small. We invite do-it-yourselfers—individuals or groups—with skills in carpentry, plumbing, painting, electrical, etc. to come in, look over our housing needs, and choose a project. Bring your own tools if possible.

LIBRARY:

Peace and Justice books for the Berrigan House Library.

\$CASH MONEY\$:

Cash donations are essential to pay our property taxes, utilities, repair and maintenance of property, upkeep and gas for two vans, purchase of needed supplies, our community gardening and for the continued publication and mailing of the via pacis, a good 20% of our annual expenses.

DMCW WEBSITE

For up to date news & info on the community, the Rachel Corrie Project, Berrigan House and Occupy the World Food Prize visit the DMCW web page: www.dmcatholicworker.org/.



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